

TERROR



TALES



REPRINT
EDITION

NO. 24

FROM THE

CRYPT

FEATURING...



THE GHOUL



THE OLD WITCH



THE VAULT-KEEPER

THE
ANGER
QUICKSAND
KEEP AWAY!



ELBSTER

THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEY, HEY! I SEE YOU GOT UP ENOUGH NERVE TO BUY *TALKS FROM THE CRYPT* AGAIN! WELL, I WON'T DRAGON! YOU'LL GET YOUR FAIR SHARE OF SHAKES AND SHIVERS, BELIEVE ME! PEACH TO BEGIN! GOOD! NOW LIE BACK ON THE MARBLE SLAB, PULL THE SHEET UP OVER YOUR HEAD, AND I'LL TELL YOU THE FIRST STORY! IT'S HARRY GORDON'S STORY, TOLD IN *His OWN WORDS!*" HE CALLS IT.

BATS IN MY BELFRY!



I FIRST FOUND OUT THAT I WAS GOING DEAF WHEN I VISITED OUR FAMILY DOCTOR. I HAD GONE TO HIM BECAUSE OF A PAINFUL EARRACHE.

I'M SORRY, HENRY! I KNOW WHAT THIS WILL DO TO YOUR CAREER! "THE SYMPTOMS ARE UNMISTAKABLE!" IN A MONTH OR SO YOU WILL BE STONE DEAF!

ARE YOU SURE, DOCTOR? CAN'T YOU DO ANYTHING? OPERATE?

NOT ANYTHING
CAN BE DONE
FOR YOU! THERE'S
NO OPERATION!

I SEE! WELL
... THANK YOU
FOR EVERYTHING!
DOCTOR!



I WENT HOME TO MY WIFE JOAN! I
TOLD HER WHAT THE DOCTOR HAD
SAID...

YOU... YOU MEAN
YOU WON'T BE
ABLE TO ACT
ANYMORE?

HOW COULD
IT TO MISS MY
VOICE?
EXPRESSION
WOULD BE LOST!



THERE MUST BE
SOME FOLKS THEY
CAN DO! SO I SEE
SPECIALISTS?
WAKE UP!

I WILL, DEAR!
I WILL...



BUT EVERY DOCTOR I WENT TO TOLD ME THE SAME
STORY! IT WAS USELESS! WHEN I STARTED TO MISS
OUR DARTING...

SORRY, HARRY! WE'LL
HAVE TO GET ANOTHER
STAIR!

HUNT! WHAT DID YOU
SAY?



AND THEN IT CAME! THE THICK, HEAVY SILENCE! I
WAS STONE DEAF! I WALKED IN A WORLD OF STILL-
NESS! THE TRAFFIC, THE CROWDS, THE ORCHESTRA
IN MY DREAMS... ALL SILENT! I HAD TO LEARN TO
LIP-READ TO UNDERSTAND WHAT JOAN SAID TO ME...

I SAID OUR HOME'S PRACTICALLY
BONE! UNDERSTAND? WE'RE
ALMOST DONE... BONE...
CLEANED OUT!

YES, JOAN...



THINGS GOT WORSE! I TRIED TO FIND WORK, BUT I COULDN'T
DO ANYTHING! ACTING WAS ALL I KNEW! THEN I THOUGHT
OF AN OLD FRIEND, JOHN BAYNE! JOHN AND I HAD PLAYED
SUMMER STOCK TOGETHER! THEN JOHN HAD SOME BLIND!
I WENT TO SEE HIM...

WELL, WELL, HARRY GORDON!
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU!

DID... DID YOU SAY MY
NAME, JOHN? I... I'M
DEAF! I CAN'T HEAR
YOU! DID YOU SAY MY
NAME?



OF COURSE! I RECOGNIZED
YOU IMMEDIATELY!

YOU CAN SEE?
THEN WHY DO YOU
WEAR DARK
GLASSES?



WILLIAM M. WALKER

TO HIDE MY EYES? "GOOD LORD" THESE EYES!



JOHN'S EYES BLEAMED YELLOW IN THE DIM LIGHT OF HIS ROOM! THEY WERE THE EYES OF A CAT!

WHAT...WHAT DID YOU DO TO YOURSELF? YOUR EYES...



YES? THEY'RE CAT'S EYES! BUT HOW DARK, HAIRY? I CAN SEE!

I HAD DIFFICULTY READING JOHN'S LIPS, BUT I MANAGED TO UNDERSTAND ENOUGH OF WHAT HE SAID TO GET THE WHOLE STORY...

I FOUND OUT ABOUT HIM THROUGH ANOTHER EX-BLIND MAN! HE'S A DEAFMUT! HE OPERATED ON ME! I GRAFTED THESE CAT'S EYES! AND NOW, I CAN SEE...



DO YOU THINK HE CAN HELP ME, JOHN? RESTORE MY HEARING THE SAME WAY?

WHY DON'T YOU GO SEE HIM? I'LL GIVE YOU HIS ADDRESS...



THE SHOP WAS IN A DARK AND WINDING BACK STREET IN THE SHABBIEST PART OF THE CITY! THERE WERE MORE STUPID ANIMALS IN THE DIRT WINDS...



JOHN SAID HE WASN'T A DOCTOR... BUT... THIS? THIS LOOKS LIKE A DEAFMUT'S SHOP!

I WENT IN! A LITTLE BELL TINKLED BEHIND A CLUTTERED DOOR AT THE REAR OF THE SHOP! THE DOOR OF STALENESS AND DIRT HUNG HEAVILY ON THE AIR! HE CAME FROM BEHIND THE CURTAIN! HE WAS TALL AND DARK, DIABOLIC LOOKING...

YOU... YOU WERE RECOMMENDED... BY A FRIEND? YOU... HELPED HIM TO SEE AGAIN? I WONDERED IF...

I SEE BY THE WAY YOU WATCH MY LIPS THAT YOU ARE DEAF! COME INTO THE BACK! I WILL EXAMINE YOU!



THE REAR OF THE SHOP LOOKED LIKE AN ALCHEMIST'S NIGHTMARE! THERE WERE BOTTLES AND JARS OF VARIOUS COLORED LIQUIDS AND POWDERS! OUT IN THE CENTER OF THE ROOM WAS A MODERN-LOOKING OPERATING TABLE WITH UP-TO-DATE EQUIPMENT! HE EXAMINED ME CAREFULLY...

YOUR AUDITORY NERVES ARE PARALYZED! I WILL HAVE TO REPLACE YOUR WHOLE HEARING SYSTEM WITH SOMETHING DIFFERENT...



WHAT DO YOU HAVE
IN MIND?

I PROPOSE TRANSFER-
RING THE AUDITORY
SYSTEM OF A BAT INTO
YOUR BODY...



A BAT?

TEST THE BAT'S AUDITORY SYSTEM IS **IMPOSED?**
IT IS **EXTRA-SENSITIVE!** IF THE OPERATION IS A
SUCCESS, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO **HEAR BETTER**
THAN YOU DID **BEFORE** YOU LOST YOUR HEARING...



I AGREE TO THE OPERATION! AFTER
ALL... WHAT DID I HAVE TO LOSE?

BREATHE DEEP, MR. GORDON!



WHEN I CAME OUT OF THE ANES-
THETIC, I LOOKED ABOUT! HE WAS
STANDING OVER ME! HE STARTED
TO SPEAK...

MY HEAD! **DON'T TALK!**
HOW DO YOU FEEL?



HIS VOICE SLAMMED INTO MY SPIRIT!
IT WAS HARSH AND LOUD...

YOU'LL GET USED
TO IT, MR. GORDON!

I... I
CERTAINLY
HOPE so!



CAN YOU IMAGINE THE SENSATION? HAVE YOU EVER
TURNED A RADIO UP **FOUL BLAST?** THAT'S WHAT
EVERYTHING SOUNDED LIKE TO ME AS I MADE MY
WAY HOME! WHEN I OPENED THE DOOR I HEARD JOAN'S
VOICE! SHE WAS UPSTAIRS ON THE PHONE...

IS THERE HE JUST CAME IN? I'LL
HAVE TO RUN UP NOW, CAROLINE!
SCOOBY, DEAREST? YES... OF
COURSE I LOVE YOU!



I COULDN'T **BELIEVE** IT! JOAN... AND ANOTHER
JOAN? I DECIDED **NOT** TO TELL JOAN ABOUT MY GOOD
FORTUNE... ABOUT MY HEARING BEING RESTORED! I
WANTED TO WAIT... TO FIND OUT MORE! THAT NIGHT,
I COULDN'T SLEEP! I GOT DRESSED AND WENT FOR
A WALK...



FUNNY! I HAVE THE
STRANGEST FEELING...
LIKE I WANT TO
SCREAM...

I GUESS I WALKED ALL NIGHT! WHEN I RETURNED, JOAN WRO-GONE! SHE HAD GOTTEN A JOB SINCE I LOST MY HEARING AND MUST HAVE LEFT EARLY THAT MORNING...



A HEAVY DROWSINESS CAME OVER ME? I DON'T REMEMBER FALLING ASLEEP... BUT WHEN I WOKED



I SLEPT TO THE FLOOR! I WAS IN A CLOSET! I HAD FALLEN ASLEEP HANGING UPSIDE DOWN FROM THE CLOTHES POLE



I STUMBLED INTO THE BATHROOM AND LOOKED AT MYSELF IN THE MIRROR? I NEEDED A SHAVE EARLY, BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING ELSE



I WAS FRIGHTENED? I SHOWN CAREFULLY CLEAVING MY FACE OF THE NIGHT? THEN I STEPPED INTO THE SHOWER? AS I WASHED MY ARM TO SOAP SOAP IT



I DRESSED QUICKLY AND RUSHED TO MY FRIEND JOHN'S HOUSE... JOHN WHO HAD FIRST RECOGNIZED THE STRANGE SHOP WITH ITS STILL STRANGER PROPRIETARY? IT WAS GETTING DARK OUTSIDE? I SLUNG IN HIS DOOR WITHOUT KNOWING...



HIS ROOM WAS DARK! LIT? HIS FELINE EYES GLOWED WITH AN EERIE YELLOW LIGHT? HE LAY IN A CORNER, WHITE, PICKED-CLEAN, BORED ABOUT WHAT HIS FACE WAS COVERED WITH A DARK-BLACK FUR.



IT'S THAT HORRIBLE POND! HE... HE'S DONE SOMETHING TO ME! THESE AREN'T CAT'S EYES HE'S GIVEN ME! THEY'RE THE EYES OF A PANTHER! AND... I CAN'T HELP MYSELF! I... I HAVE AN URGENT LINE TO... *CALL!*

LOVE
HELP
US!

JOHN CLAPPED ON A LIGHT...

LOOK AT ME! LOOK! I'M EVEN BEGINNING TO LOOK LIKE A PANTHER! DON'T GO TO HIM, HARRY! DON'T!

IT'S TOO
LATE, JOHN!
IT'S TOO
LATE!

JOHN SMILED! HIS EYES SHINED! I GOT OUT! I BEGAN TO WALK...

THAT EXPLAINS MY FALLING ASLEEP HANGING UPSIDE DOWN IN THE CLOSET... THE SEET HANDS ON MY FACE... THE MEMORANE GROWING ACROSS MY ARMPITS! I... I'M TURNING INTO A BAT!

AND THAT NIGHT, AS I WALKED THROUGH THE BLACKNESS, I BEGAN TO UTTER SHORT SHRIIL SHRIERS! AND I LISTENED FOR THE SHRIERS TO ECHO BACK! I WAS USING THE BAT'S RADAR-LIKE DEVICE FOR TRAVELING THROUGH THE DARKNESS! WHEN DAWN CAME, I MADE MY WAY HOME...

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN ALL NIGHT? CAN YOU UNDERSTAND MET WHY DID YOU STAY OUT ALL NIGHT?

I... I GOT A JOB, JOAN! NIGHT WORK!

GOOD! THEN I'LL GOIT MINE... TODAY!

IF YOU LIKE, JOAN! I... I'M TIRED! I'M GOING TO BED!

SHE WENT OUT AND I LAY EXHAUSTED ON THE BED! AGAIN, I DON'T REMEMBER FALLING ASLEEP, BUT WHEN I AWOKED WAS HANGING UPSIDE DOWN IN THE CLOSET! I HEARD VOICES... JOAN'S VOICE... AND A MAN'S...

HE CARRIED A LARGE INSURANCE POLICY, \$-BLOOD! HE TOOK IT OUT WHILE HE WAS AGING AND MAKING GOOD MONEY!

IS IT STILL IN EFFECT?

I LISTENED FROM MY LAIR IN THE CLOSET, I LISTENED...

YES! THE PREMIUM IS DUE NEXT MONTH!

WE'LL BE RIGHT AFTER WE KILL HIM.



I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY EARS! THEY WERE PLANNING TO **KIDNAP** ME? I GOT DOWN FROM THE SLOTTED POLE AND SLOWLY OPENED THE DOOR...



I RUSHED DOWN THE STAIRS AND **BOOM!** THE DOOR BEFORE THEY COULD STOP ME.

IT WAS **HARRY!** HE MUST HAVE **HEARD** US! HE'LL GO TO THE POLICE!

I'LL **STOP** HIM... IF I HAVE TO...



JOAN'S LOVER CAME AFTER ME! THE SIDEWALKS WERE DARK AND DESERTED! I... **RAN...** UTTERING LITTLE SHRIIL, HIGH-PITCHED SHRIERS! THEY NAMED ME OF FENSER, DEAD-END ALLEYS, AND BLIND STREETS...



HURRY! IT'S NO USE! I'LL GET YOU...

AS I RAN, I LOOKED DOWN! CLAMS SPRANG FROM MY FINGERS WHERE NAILS HAD STOPPED...

AND WHEN I DO... **HARRY!**



I PULSED MY CLAMMED HAND OVER MY NOSE! IT WAS **HARRY!**... AND OVER MY LOWER LIP, **HUSS!**



FANST! I'VE SHOWN FANST!

WHEN I GET YOU, **HARRY!** I'LL KILL YOU!

I STOPPED RUNNING! THERE WAS NO NEED TO RUN ANY LONGER! I KNEW WHAT I HAD TO DO! JOAN'S LOVER CAME UP TO ME, LEECHING! THEN, HIS EYES WIDENED IN HORROR! I SPRANG AT HIM...



NO... **NO!** KEEP AWAY!

HE LAY SPRAWLED BRUTALLY ON THE COBBLESTONES... WHITE AS CHALK! TWO PUNCTURES THICKER CLAVES ON HIS NECK! HE WAS DEAD! I HAD DRAINED HIS BLOOD...



I... I'M NOT...
JUST AN
ORDINARY
BAT...



I'M A VAMPIRE BAT!



I RAPIDLY FLEW BACK THROUGH THE STREETS TO MY HOUSE... BACK TO JOHN...

I KILLED HIM, JOHN!

DO YOU GET HIM, CHA... HARRY! WHAT... WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU?



I KILLED HIM, AS YOU HAD PLANNED TO KILL ME! AND NOW I MUST KILL YOU... FOR...

NO, HARRY! NO!



HER THINGY WAS WHITE AND SOFT... NOT LIKE MINE! WHEN I HAD FINISHED...

NOW, I'VE GOT TO GO AWAY... AND HIDE...



I FOUND A PLACE... A Nice QUIET PLACE TO HIDE! IT'S IN THIS COFFIN, IN THIS MAUSOLEUM! WHAT DID I DO WITH THE BODY THAT OCCUPIED IT BEFORE I CAME? OH, I BROUGHT IT TO JOHN... MY FRIEND! HE MADE SHORT WORK OF IT!



HER, HEN? WELL, THAT'S HARRY'S STORY, KIDDIE! PERSONALLY, I THINK HE WAS A LITTLE *BATTE*, DON'T YOU? OH, BY THE WAY! IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY RECEIVED MY 5 BY 7 PICTURE... NOT A CRATING BUT AN ACTUAL PHOTOGRAPHED REPRODUCTION AS I APPEAR IN THE FLESH... READ MY COLUMN, THE GRAY-ZEPPED'S JOURNAL! IN THIS ISSUE! AND NOW I'LL TURN YOU OVER TO THAT BAW, THE OLD WITCH!

STREETS

THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!



HUMP! NOW THAT YOU HAVE BEEN DULY BORED BY THE GHOST-KEEPER'S FAIRY TALE, I'LL TELL YOU A HORROR STORY! COME CLOSER AND GAZE INTO THE SHUDDERING CONTENTS OF MY GALLERIES! GAZE DEEP AND SOON YOU'LL SEE THE FIRST SCENE OF A CHILLING TALE I CALL...

THE LIVING DEATH!

LESTER JEROME AND ARNOLD WANNING HAD BEEN CLOSE FRIENDS ALL THROUGH THE YEARS AT MEDICAL SCHOOL. THEY HAD STUDIED TOGETHER AND GRADUATED TOGETHER! THEY HAD EVEN INFORMED TOGETHER AT THE SAME HOSPITAL! THEY HAD DONE EVERYTHING TOGETHER! AND, TOGETHER, THEY HAD FALLEN IN LOVE WITH THE SAME GIRL.



EVEN LAUREN WAKE UP YOUR WHIP! LESTER OR ME?

WHY NOT BOTH OF YOU?

SAY THAT'S NOT A BAD IDEA! WE'LL BOTH TAKE HER TO THE MOVIES, ARNOLD!

YES! LESTER AND ARNOLD HAD BEGUN THEIR MEDICAL CAREERS TOGETHER! BUT SOON, THEY BEGAN TO DRIFT APART! THEY BEGAN TO DIFFER IN THEORIES OF MEDICINE.



I SAY THAT THE MAJORITY OF ILLNESSES ARE NOTHING BUT PRODUCTS OF THE MIND! THEY ARE PSYCHOLOGICALLY INCURRED!

SAH! LESTER, YOU'RE MAD! AN ILLNESS IS AN ILLNESS AND SHOULD BE TREATED AS SUCH!

AND DO LESTER, JEROME AND ARNOLD MANNING CAME TO A CROSSROADS AND EACH WENT IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION! LESTER TOOK THE PATH OF PSYCHOSOMATIC MEDICINE... THE TREATMENT OF ILLNESSES THROUGH THE MIND, WHILE ARNOLD TOOK THE PATH OF SURGERY... THE TREATMENT OF ILLNESSES BY SCALPEL, NEEDLE, AND PILL!... THE GIRL THEY BOTH LOVED... STOOD BETWEEN THEM, TRYING TO MAKE UP HER MIND!



LAURIE AND LESTER BECAME ENGAGED THE MONTHS WENT BY AND THE WEDDING DAY DREW NEAR! ABOUT A WEEK BEFORE THE EVENTUAL DAY LAURIE BECAME VERY SICK! SHE WAS RUINED TO THE HOSPITAL...

HERE, LESTER! HERE ARE THE X-RAYS! LOOK FOR YOURSELF! SHE HAS A TUMOROUS GROWTH ON HER HEART! AN OPERATION MIGHT SAVE HER LIFE!

NIGHT, YOU SAY? WHAT ARE HER CHANCES, ARNOLD?



THEN, ONE DAY, ARNOLD MANNING, THE SURGEON, RECEIVED A PHONE CALL FROM LAURIE! HE WENT TO SEE HER...

I... I DON'T KNOW TO SAY THAT, ARNOLD. BUT, WELL... LESTER HAS ASKED ME TO MARRY HIM, AND I'VE ACCEPTED! I'M... GLAD!

OH! I FEEL WELL. I HOPE YOU'LL BOTH BE VERY HAPPY TOGETHER!



I... I CAN'T TELL, LESTER! MAYBE ONE CHANCE IN TEN! IT'S A VERY DELICATE OPERATION!

THEN I WON'T ALLOW YOU TO PERFORM IT! I'LL SAVE HER THROUGH PSYCHOSOMATIC MEDICINE BY MYSELF! I'M SURE I CAN!



DON'T BE A FOOL, LESTER! SURGERY IS THE ONLY WAY! YOU CAN'T STOP A TUMOR THROUGH PSYCHOLOGY!

YES! IT'S POSSIBLE! BY HYPNOTISM I'LL REMOVE IT! AFTER ALL... GROWTH IS CONTROLLED BY THE BRAIN!



I'M IN CHARGE HERE, DOCTOR JEROME! THERE'S NO TIME FOR YOUR PSYCHOSOMATIC HOOD-WADD! LAURIE'S LIFE IS AT STAKE.

BUT YOU ADMITTED THAT SHE DOESN'T HAVE MUCH OF A CHANCE!



YES! BUT THERE'S STILL THAT CHANCE! I'M ORDERING THE OPERATION! I SHALL PERFORM IT MYSELF!

NO! GIVE ME A TRY! PLEASE!



BUT LESTER DIDN'T GET HIS CHANCE! THE HOSPITAL BOARD VOTED HIM DOWN, AND DOCTOR ARNOLD MANNING PERFORMED THE OPERATION! HE DID HIS BEST, BUT



THE ONE DIED, LESTER?

OH I DROPPED... NO!

I COULD HAVE SAVED HER! I COULD HAVE SAVED HER IF YOU HAD GIVEN ME THE CHANCE! YOU KILLED HER, MANNING! YOU AND YOUR SURGERY!



...I DID ALL I COULD, LESTER!

AND? YOU COULDN'T HAVE LISTENED TO ME! BUT NO! YOU'RE A SHAMELESS FOP-ATE FOUT! THAT'S ALL YOU KNOW!



WELL, I'LL ZAP YOU, DOCTOR MANNING! SOMEDAY, I'LL CONVINCE YOU THAT I WAS RIGHT!

POW! POW, DOCTOR JEROME! PERHAPS, BUT I DOUBT IT!



AND SO THE YEARS PASSED! DOCTOR ARNOLD MANNING BECAME A WORLD FAMOUS SURGEON, WHILE DOCTOR LESTER JEROME REMAINED AN OSCURE PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIST.

DOO JEROME! I WOULDN'T GO TO HIM ON A JIFF! HE DON'T GIVE YOU PILLS OR NOTHING! JUST HYPNOTIZES YOU... PSYCHOANALYZES YOU... THE BUI DUGHT TO BE PSYCHO-ANALYZED HIMSELF! HE'S AOTS!



ONE DAY, WHILE DOCTOR ARNOLD MANNING WAS PERFORMING A ROUTINE OPERATION...



DOCTOR MANNING! WHAT IS IT?

O... EASY... CAN'T SEE? EVERYTHING... IS BLURRED! TAKE OVER... DOCTOR...

DOCTOR MANNING SLUMPED TO THE FLOOR, UNCONSCIOUS! HIS ASSISTANT TOOK OVER WHILE THEY CARRIED DOCTOR MANNING OUT OF THE OPERATING ROOM TO A HOSPITAL BED.



NO PAIN DRAGON! GET HIM TO X-RAY... AT ONCE!

PUPILS DILATED.

DOCTOR! YOU MEAN...



DOCTOR LESTER JEROME STOPPED ASIDE AND DOCTOR ARNOLD MANNING ENTERED THE NEAT WHITE OFFICE! ONCE THERE, HE EXPLAINED TO DOCTOR JEROME THE REASON FOR HIS VISIT! DOCTOR LESTER JEROME LISTENED QUIETLY, AND THEN... WHEN DOCTOR MANNING HAD FINISHED... BOSTER CUT LAUGHING!

SO! THE REPELICAL DOCTOR MANNING TURNS TO *PERFIDIOUS MACHINES* AS A LAST RESORT, EN? NOW, YOU RELUCTANTLY AGREE TO GIVE ME A CHANCE, LESTER, EN?

DO NOT LAUGH, LESTER!

WHY SHOULDN'T I LAUGH, ARNOLD? WHEN *LAUREL* STOOD BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH, I WAS A *DRUCK*... A *CHARLATAN*! BUT NOW WHEN YOUR LIFE IS AT STAKE... YOU COME FLENNING? WELL... I CANNOT REFUSE YOU! IN FACT, IT WILL GIVE ME GREAT PLEASURE TO *PROVE* THAT I AM CORRECT...



LESTER AND ARNOLD MANNING INTO A DIMLY LIT ROOM! HE DEATED HIM IN A COMFORTABLE CHAIR AND TRAINED A SPOTLIGHT ON HIS EYES...

WHAT... WHAT IF I SHOULD *DIE* WHILE UNDER YOUR HYPNOTIC TRANCE, LESTER?

YOU WILL NOT DIE, ARNOLD! I'LL SEE TO THAT!



SOON DOCTOR ARNOLD MANNING'S EYES GREW HEAVY! UNDER THE SPELL OF DOCTOR LESTER'S SOFT BOOMING TONES, ARNOLD FELL INTO A DEEP HYPNOTIC SLEEP...

YOU WILL REMAIN IN THIS STATE UNTIL I UTTER THE WORD 'LAUREL' UNDER... THEN YOU WILL AWAKE! DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

I STAND.



AND WHILE YOU ARE IN THIS HYPNOTIC TRANCE, ARNOLD... YOU WILL NOT DIE! REMEMBER! YOU WILL NOT DIE...

I WILL... NOT... DIE...



NOW OPEN YOUR EYES! YOU WILL SPEAK AND ACT NORMALLY WHILE YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS MIND REMAINS HYPNOTIZED! YOU ARE FREE TO GET HOME BACK IN TWO DAYS!

THANK YOU, DOCTOR JEROME!



DOCTOR ARNOLD MARRING LEFT DOCTOR JEROME'S OFFICE AND WALKED THOUGHTFULLY TOWARDS HIS HOME AS HE CROSSED A BUSY INTERSECTION...



THEY PULLED ARNOLD FROM BENEATH THE CAR! THE FRONT WHEELS HAD ROLLED OVER HIM! HE WAS IN A COMA...



THE SAIL OF THE AMBULANCE SWIRL SCREAMED THROUGH THE CITY AS ARNOLD MARRING WAS CARRIED TO THE HOSPITAL...



A HASTY EXAMINATION FOLLOWED...



WHEN DOCTOR MANNING DID NOT RETURN TO DOCTOR JEROME'S OFFICE IN TWO DAYS, LESTER INQUIRED AT THE HOSPITAL AND LEARNED ABOUT THE ACCIDENT...

AND ALTHOUGH HE IS DEAD, HE MOVES... AROUND? HE DOES NOT DEAD?

GENTLEMEN! I CAN EXPLAIN...

DOCTOR MANNING CAME TO MEY HE ASKED ME TO CARRY A TUNOR BY HYPNOTISM! I PUT HIM IN A TRANCE AND ASSURED HIM THAT HE WOULD NOT DIE WHILE IN THIS HYPNOTIC STATE! SO... HE CANNOT DIE UNTIL I RELEASE HIM! NOW WILL HE DELAY ON TAKE ON ANY OF DEATH'S CHARACTERISTICS?

POOPY-DOCK? FOOLISHNESS!

RECALCULAT!

OH! YOU DOUBT ME? THEN FOD! FIGURE IT OUT GENTLEMEN! GOOD DAY!

A MONTH WENT BY! THEN TWO MONTHS! DOCTOR ARNOLD MANNING REMAINED IN THE SAME CONDITION! THEN ONE DAY, THE HOSPITAL SUMMONED DOCTOR LESTER JEROME...

YESTERDAY, DOCTOR MANNING REMAINED COMEOLU-NESS! HE M-MAYED AND FOUND THAT HIS CEREBRAL TUNOR HAS ALMOST ENTIRELY DISAPPEARED! HIS HEART STILL DOES NOT BEAT! HE ASKED FOR YOU! HE IS IN TERRIFIED PANIC!

GOOD! TAKE ME TO HIM!

DOCTOR LESTER JEROME SMILED AT THE WITHING ARNOLD MANNING...

HELP... ME... LESTER? THE... PAN... MY... HEART... DO... SOMETHING! THEY... TELL ME... THAT... BY ALL... MEDICAL STANDARDS... I AM... DEAD!

YES, ARNOLD! YOU'VE BEEN DEAD FOR ALMOST THREE MONTHS! I'VE KEPT YOU FROM DECAYING THROUGH HYPNOTIC! YOUR TUNOR IS GONE, TOO! YOU SEE... I COULD HAVE SAVED LADYME... I... WHAT... THE...

DOCTOR LESTER JEROME HAD UTTERED THE WORD 'LADYME', THE WORD THAT WOULD RELEASE ARNOLD MANNING FROM HIS HYPNOTIC TRANCE! AS THE GATHERED DOCTORS WATCHED, HORRIFIED, ARNOLD FELL BACK LIMPLY ON THE BED! HIS SKIN SHIVERED, AND TURNED FROM PINK TO BLUE TO A SICKENING BROWN! HIS EYES SUNK DEEP INTO HIS HEAD! THEN THEY BECAME HOLLOW BLACK SOCKETS! THE FLESH... ROTTED AND SPRINKLE, FELL FROM HIS BONES! SOON, THE BED WAS COVERED WITH NOTHING BUT A BERTHING, GLOOMING MASS OF PUTRID AND DECAYED FLESH...

MEH... HERE! TO ARNOLD FINALLY GASTRAT UP WITH HIMSELF! WHAT WAS LEFT OF HIMSELF, ANYWAY? WELL... HOW LONG CAN A DEAD MAN FIGHT OFF DECAY, OH! IT'S SOUND TO MEAN FOR SOME SOONER OR LATER! OF COURSE WITH ARNOLD IT HAD TO MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME! TOO! HAD ARNOLD DIDN'T LISTEN TO LESTER, ANYWAY? MAYBE HE WOULDN'T HAVE HAD SUCH A MASS OF HIMSELF TOY, NOW! I'LL TURN YOU OVER TO THAT PURVEYER OF FARTY TALK... THE HAULT-KEEPER!

OH, IS THE WIT? IF YOU WANT A PHOTO OF ME IN THE FLESH, READ THE CRIFT-KEEPER'S COMMENT!



CURSE!

He patted the gun-holster at his side; it reassured him and he pressed on through the matted undergrowth of the jungle. It couldn't be much farther, he reflected . . . according to the map the site was a mile east of the River of Doom.

Imagine those idiots, back in Port Au Prince, he chuckled, as he hacked his way forward. Isn't it just like these Haitians . . . falling for every VooDoo story they hear! They're positive that a fortune in jewels is hidden in this crumbling dump, yet no one has the guts to trek through the jungle after it, just because there's supposed to be a deadly curse on the house where the stuff is hidden! He patted the heavy revolver at his side once again. His gun would take care of any curse careless enough to try to keep him from getting his hands on that treasure! Let the Haitians beware of the curse they dreaded . . . the gun at his hip made him safe from this outlandish VooDoo superstition!

The clearing opened with unexpected suddenness in front of him, and under the dripping centuries-old trees he saw the dilapidated house they had described to him. It was ghostly, with that vapor seeming to rise from its sides; he thought, moving cautiously toward the sagging front door and into the dank building. He froze in his tracks immediately. Someone was seated in a chair in the center of the floor, staring off into the murkiness of the room. Quietly, taking great pains not to make a sound,

he drew the revolver from its holster, took aim and fired, at point-blank range.

Three shots rang out, and he smiled grimly as he moved toward the crumbling cabinets along one of the walls. He wasn't considered a dead-shot for nothing! He hadn't expected to find anybody sitting here and guarding that fortune in jewels . . . but he had taken care of whoever it was, anyway! The curse be damned!

The cabinets were full of sparkling jewels . . . there was a king's ransom tucked away in this hovel, his lot the taking! Suddenly the floor creaked behind him and he whirled, his hand gripping the revolver. The chair in which he had left his victim . . . it was empty! And by the glittering light of the gems he could see that there was no pool of blood where there should have been one! His head moved slightly as he slipped the safety catch on his revolver and he saw approaching . . . slowly, ominously, as if there was all eternity to accomplish its task . . . a being with the bloodless look of something long dead! Twice he fired the gun, almost convulsively . . . and still the creature kept advancing, never wavering, never altering its funereal pace!

In the next instant the truth burst in upon him in a wave of panic. This curse he had heard whispered about at Port Au Prince . . . it was one of the *Walking Dead*! THAT was why no one would accompany him on his trek . . . they knew that bullets were pathetically useless against one of the dreaded creatures!

And now the curse was reaching out and touching him, and a chill such as he had never before felt was moving down his body. It was all over, he knew, in his last moment of consciousness! He had been claimed, body and soul, by a *ZOMBIE*!

THE VAULT OF HORROR!



HELLO, AGAIN, YOU LITTLE MONSTERS! I GUESS YOU'VE BEEN EXPECTANTLY WAITING FOR THIS LATEST TALE FROM MY PRIVATE COLLECTION OF HORROR STORIES! WELL, HEH, HEH... I WON'T DISAPPOINT YOU! THIS TIME I'LL TELL YOU A TRULY ~~REVOLVING~~ YARN, SO SET A STRONG HOLD ON YOUR STOMACH! HEH! I CALL IT

MIDNIGHT SNACK!



SCENE: THE HOME OF DUNCAN REYNOLDS! TIME: MIDNIGHT!







YES, SIR? WHAT'LL IT BE?

...LET'S SEE! I'LL HAVE ER... I'LL...

SMPP! **SMPP!**
"HEN!" WHAT A SICKENING GOON!



...SIZZLING HAMBURGERS! THAT, THAT BACON FRYING! I'M... I'M SO HUNGRY! SO HUNGRY, AND YET... THE SMELL OF FOOD COOKING MAKES ME **AA!**!



WELL, MISTER, WHAT'LL IT BE?

...CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT? THAT COOKED MEAT IS... MAKING ME HANGOVER?



HEH! HEH! POOR DUNCAN! HE WANTS SO MUCH TO EAT SOMETHING... ONLY HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT IT IS THAT HE **WANTS!** ANYWAY, HE STUMBLES OUT INTO THE STREET AND SPENDS SEVERAL MINUTES THERE, REGAINING HIS COMPOURE...



...EVERYTHING SEEMS SO **DOODERED** TONIGHT? I... I **DOUNT** TO GO HOME, BUT SOMETHING... SOMETHING WON'T LET ME! I... CAN'T CONTROL MYSELF.



(GDA-AGH!) JUST THE THOUGHT OF THAT **DOODED** FOOD SICKENS ME! **HEN!** NEVER HAPPENED TO ME **BEFORE!** HMPF! LAST TIME I'LL EVER GO INTO **JNMF** RESTAUR...



...GEE? I... I FEEL... **DIZZY!** AWFULLY **DIZZY!** FEEL LIKE I'M... GOING TO PASS OUT...

BLACKNESS CLOSDS HIS EYES AND MIND? HE FEELS HIMSELF FLOATING IN A WHIRLING VOID... AND THEN, SUDDENLY, IT IS OVER...

WHAT IS... A GEMETERY?
HOW DID I GET HERE? WHERE'S
THE RESTAURANT? AND THIS
SHOVEL? HOW DID I GET THIS
SHOVEL?



AGAINST HIS WILL, HE ENTERS THE COMETERY AND GOES FROM ONE GRAVE TO ANOTHER...

WHAT AM I DOING? WHAT AM I LOOKING
FOR? HAVE I GONE CRAZY? WAIT! THIS
GRAVE! A RECENT ONE!



NOW I KNOW WHY I HAVE
THIS SHOVEL! BECAUSE I
HAVE TO DIG UP THIS... THIS
GRAVE! THIS BRAND NEW
GRAVE!



BEWILDERED, AND DRIVEN BY
A FURY HE CANNOT RESIST,
DUNCAN AGAIN AND AGAIN DIGS
DEEPER INTO THE EARTH!



FINALLY THE COFFIN IS SAVED,
THE LID RAISED...

AND HERE IT IS! HERE IS
WHAT I'VE BEEN SEARCHING
FOR ALL EVERING!



SUDDENLY, A SPARK OF REALIZATION SEEPS
INTO HIS CONSCIOUSNESS... A REALIZATION OF
WHAT HE IS ABOUT TO DO!

GOOD LORD! I... I MUST BE INSANE!
WANTING TO... TO... NO! NO! DON'T
LET ME DO IT!



OH, PLEASE! PLEASE! DON'T MAKE
ME DO IT! BUT... BUT I... MAKE TO
SOMETHING'S FORGIVE ME FO... OH-H
I... I FEEL... GUILT ASH...



HEH, HEH! AGAIN THE EMPTY TERRIFYING BLACK-
NESS SURROUNDS HIM, AND WHEN HE REGAINS
CONSCIOUSNESS...

WHA...WHAT? MUST
HAVE PASSED OUT AGAIN? I...I FEEL SO
STRANGE! I...GOOD LORD! THE...THE CORPSE!
WHAT HAVE I DONE?!



HE STARES, HORRIFIED, AT THE MUTILATED,
PARTIALLY DEVoured BODY BEFORE HIM...

L. I ~~TRIED~~ NOT TO DO IT! I ~~TRIED~~! BUT
THE CRAVING WAS TOO
STRONG! I...WHAT'S
THAT NOISE?



PEOPLE! A CROWD OF
PEOPLE... WITH TORCHES!
THEY'RE AFTER ME...
GOING THIS WAY!



THEY WANT TO TAKE AWAY MY
FOOD! BUT I WON'T LET
THEM! I'LL RUN AWAY
WITH IT!



THEY'VE SEEN ME!...HAVE TO
RUN FASTER! I'LL HIDE MY
FOOD! MUSTN'T LET THEM
CATCH ME!



TIRING UNDER THE CORPSE'S WEIGHT AS HE
DODGES AND WEAVES THROUGH THE GRAVEYARD,
DUNCAN SUDDENLY TRIPS...AND FALLS!



AN ETERNITY SEEMS TO PASS, BUT FINALLY HIS
ARM QUIVERS... HIS EYES FLICKER AND OPEN...

WHE! I'M BACK HOME! WHERE...WHERE'S
THE GRAVEYARD...THE CORPSE? OH...I...I
GET IT NOW! HUH! I'VE BEEN HERE ALL THE
TIME! MUST HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP!
I'VE ONLY BEEN DREAMING!





It was a diabolical plot! Ralph was sure
Cora would be...

SCARED TO DEATH!



CORA CLUTCHED HER SHAWL TIGHTLY AROUND HER
THROAT AND STARED HORRIFIED INTO THE DARKNESS
OF THE HALLWAY OUTSIDE HER ROOM! RALPH, HER
HUSBAND, GRAPED THE ARM OF HER WHEELCHAIR,
STUDYING HER...

"HE... HE'S COMING, CORA!
YOUR UNCLE'S COMING
FOR US!"

"NO! NO, RALPH! I
WON'T BELIEVE IT!"



CORA'S FACE WAS WET WITH PERSPIRATION! HER HAND
TREMBLED... THE SHAWLS WHITENED... AS SHE DROVE
HER SHAWL PROTECTIVELY ABOUT HER! RALPH SMILED
SLIGHTLY AS HE WATCHED HER REACTION! IT WAS
GOING TO WORK! IT HAD TO!

"LISTEN, CORA! LISTEN! HE
FOOTSTEPS... ON THE STAIRS!
HE'S COMING TO AVENGE HIS
MURDER!"

"STOP IT, RALPH!
STOP IT..."



TEARS FILLED CORA'S EYES! THEY SPILLED OVER THE PIN OF HER EYEBLIND AND RAN CRABLY DOWN HER CHEEK! SHE BEGAN TO SOB... HEAVENS! SOLE THAT WHACKED HER BODY AND SHIFTED HER WHEELCHAIR.



REMEMBER, CORA? REMEMBER THE NIGHT WE KILLED HIM?

CORA GASPED! RALPH CHUCKLED TO HIMSELF! POOR CORA! ONE MORE HEART ATTACK WILL SURELY KILL HER! THE DOCTOR HAD TOLD RALPH...



REMEMBER, CORA? WE DID IT... FOR HIS MONEY?

P. PLEASE, RALPH! SOB... SOB, PLEASE DON'T...

AS RALPH WATCHED CORA, HIS THOUGHTS WENT BACK... BACK OVER THE LONG MONTHS TO THE BEGINNING! IT HAD ALL STARTED AT A COCKTAIL PARTY GIVEN BY HER UNCLE IN CORA'S HONOR...



REALLY, FRANK? I FEEL TERRIBLE ABOUT THIS! GOING TO A PARTY WITHOUT AN INVITATION!

FORGET IT, RALPH! CORA'S UNCLE SHOULDN'T KNOW YOU WERE VISITING ME!



YES, BUT...

SHHH! HERE HE COMES NOW!

AND FRANK! GLAD YOU CAME! WHO'S YOUR FRIEND?

OH, THIS IS RALPH KEARNEY! HE'S FROM NEW YORK! I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF BRINGING HIM ALONG TO YOUR NIECE'S PARTY! I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND!

NOWHERE! HOW DO YOU DO, RALPH? I'M CORA'S UNCLE, ALEX WEATHERBY! GLAD TO HAVE YOU!

RALPH SMILED TO HIMSELF AS HE WATCHED CORA SCURRY IN HER WHEELCHAIR! YES! THAT WAS WHEN HE HAD FIRST MET HER.



HELLO, FRANK! WHO'S THE PRETTY ONE?

THAT'S YOUR HOSTESS, CORA WEATHERBY! SHE SETS ALL THIS UP WHEN THE OLD GEEZER DROPS! SOLE HEIR.

SOLE HEIR? ALL OF ALEX WEATHERBY'S WEALTH WOULD BE CORA'S SOME DAY! SUDDENLY IT HAD COME TO RALPH... THE WHOLE PLAN...



WELL, FRANK! YOU'RE SOME FAL! AIN'T YOU GOING TO INTRODUCE ME?

OH, YEAH! SURE, RALPH! 'GONNA! GONNA...

THERE WAS A HORSE BELOW? CORA JUMPED, SAYING FOR BREATH! RALPH CROSSED HER. HER ORAL-WHITE SKIN. HER WRINKLED FOREHEAD! SHE WASN'T PRETTY NOT ANYMORE! NOT AS SHE HAD BEEN WHEN HE HAD FIRST ASKED...

WILL YOU MARRY ME, CORA? I KNOW WE'VE ONLY KNOWN EACH OTHER A SHORT TIME, YET.

OH, RALPH! DO YOU REALLY WANT ME?

AGAIN RALPH LAUGHED SILENTLY! CORA... ADMITS THE PUNYHOOD! LIKE NOW... CRIMSON... SNAKING! THE BILLY BOO! HE HAD WANTED HER UNCLE'S MONEY... NOT HER...

THEN, YOU... YOU'LL SAY YES?

OF COURSE, DARLING! OF COURSE I'LL MARRY YOU!



NOT THAT CORA HAD BEEN SO BAD TO LOOK AT BACK THEN! YET TO RALPH, EXPERIENCED, WORLDLY, SURE... THE MONEY HAD SEEMED SO MUCH MORE ATTRACTIVE.

THE WIND OUTSIDE CORA'S BED-ROOM WHISTLED THROUGH THE TREES! ANOTHER NOISE... ANOTHER GASP! RALPH WRINGED HER CLOSET! SHE WAS BREATHING HEAVEN, NOW... PAINFULLY...

AND THEN THE WEDDING! RALPH ESPECIALLY REMEMBERED THE WEDDING! NOW HE HAD SLIPPED THE RING ON HER FINGER, SAYING THE WORDS... BUT THINKING...



WHAT WAS THAT, CORA? NO, SURE! ANOTHER FOOTSTEP... I WANT... ON THE STAIRS... IT CAN'T BE...



AH, THE NIGHTMOON! THE DRIVE TO EUROPE... ON THE OLD MAN'S MONEY...

AND THEN THOSE HOTTER MONTHS AT THE PLANT! WORKING, LIKE ANY OTHER LABORER, IN THE OLD MAN'S PLANT...



WHAT A BEAUTIFUL MOON TONIGHT! LOVE ME, DARLING!

WITH ALL MY HEART, CORA!

NOT TO MARRY AT THE BOTTOM, SOME SOMEDAY THIS PLANT WILL BE CORA'S... AND YOU'LL HAVE TO RUN IT

OF COURSE, UNCLE ALEX! I UNDERSTAND I WANT TO LEARN

WANTED IT! RALPH HAD ASKED IT! HATED EVERY-
THING ABOUT IT! AND THEN IT HAD COME TO HIM! THE
PERFECT SOLUTION...



OF COURSE! WHAT A POOL, I'VE
SEEN! NOW, WHY WAIT TILL
THE OLD GEEKER DIES? WHY
NOT... HELP HIM?

YES! THE NEXT FEW MONTHS HAD BEEN TOUGH
ON RALPH! HE HAD HAD TO BE ON HIS TOES! CONVINING
SOPH WASN'T EASY.

AND
THEN, IN FRONT OF THE MEN,
HE INSULTED ME... CALLED
ME INCOMPETENT...
A RUMORFELL!

OH, RALPH, DARLING!
I'M SO SORRY!
I'LL... I'LL SPEAK
TO HIM.



IT HAD TAKEN PATIENCE... AND
INGENUITY.

NO, SOPH! I'LL
FIGHT MY OWN
BATTLES!

I CAN'T UNDER-
STAND HIS ACTIONS!
I REALLY CAN'T!

HE HAD HAD TO USE CAREFUL
THINGS... PSYCHOLOGY...

...CALLED ME A FOLD-
SWITCH! ACCUSED ME
OF MARRIAGE! FOR
YOUR INHERITANCE!

AND
THE
MATERIAL,
OLD.

BEST! AND THEN HE SAID THAT HE'D
CUT FORD OUT OF HIS WILL!

HE ACCUSED FORD OF
THE SAME THING...
THAT ALL FORD
CARED ABOUT WAS
HIS MONEY!

LET HIM!
HE'S NOTHING
BUT A BITTER
UNFORTUNATE OLD
SKINFLINT!



A PUSHOVER... THAT'S WHAT SOPH HAD ALWAYS BEEN!
AT FIRST SHE HAD VIOLENTLY OBJECTED, BUT SOON...
SHE HAD RELUCTANTLY AGREED.

WHY NOT? IT'S FORD'S MONEY,
RIGHT? HE'S OLD! HE'S
LIVED HIS LIFE! IT'LL
BE EASY.

ALL RIGHT!
ALL RIGHT!
WE'LL KILL
HIM!



AND SO, ONE NIGHT, AN OLD UNCLE ALEX WERTHORN
HAD BEEN STROLLING NEAR THE POND ON HIS VAST
ESTATE...



THEY HAD PUT HIM, UNCONSCIOUS,
PAGE DOWN IN THE POND.

IT'LL LOOK LIKE
HE FELL STRUCK
HIS HEAD AND
DROWNED!

OH, RALPH! I,
BOB, I'M
AFRAID!

LATER THAT NIGHT THEY HAD
CALLED THE POLICE

YES! HE WENT OUT
ABOUT THREE HOURS
AGO... AND HARRY
COME BACK!

THE POLICE HAD COME... HAD
SEARCHED THE GROUNDS... AND
FOUND HIM...

POOR OLD BINK!
'CLIPPED AND
FELL... GUESSED!

WELL, LET'S GET
HIM INSIDE!



YES, THEY'D GOTTEN AWAY WITH IT! CORA INHERITED THE
MONEY BUT SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED TO HER! PERHAPS
IT WAS HER CONSCIENCE BOOTHERING HER! ANYWAY SHE'D
BEGUN TO BROOD. LOOK WHO!... AND RAPIDLY

CORA! YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING
TERRIBLE, LATELY! YOU'VE GOT
TO FORGET ABOUT IT, DO
YOU HEAR?

I CAN'T, RALPH!
(BOB) I, CAN'T!



SHE HAD DROWN HERSELF... FRIGHTENED! SHE'D JUMP
AT EVERY SOUND! THEN SHE'D HAD HER HEART ATTACK...

SHE'S A SICK WOMAN, RALPH!
ANOTHER ATTACK WILL
SURELY KILL HER! SHE
MUST TAKE IT VERY
EASY...

I UNDERSTAND, BOOTH!



AND SO THE IDEA HAD COME TO RALPH! WITH CORA
DEAD, THE WEATHERLY FORTUNE WOULD BE HIS...
ALL OF IT! AND CORA WOULD BE A PIONEER...

GOOD LORD!



WHAT? WHAT IS IT,
RALPH?

I... I THOUGHT I SAW HIS FACE...
UNCLE ALEX'S FACE... STARRING
AT US! THROUGH THE WINDOW!

NO! YOU'RE JOKING...
BOB... WITH ME!



THE WIND FLAMMED A SHOTTER
DOWNSTAIRS AND RALPH SHRIEPPED
OUT OF HIS REVERIE! CORA, STILL
TREMBLING, WAS STARING INTO THE
DARKENED HALLWAY...

WHAT WAS THAT?
ANOTHER FOOTSTEP?

NO-NO!
I.E...



RALPH SMILED! THIS NIGHT...THE
WIND...EVERYTHING HAD BEEN PER-
FECT! 'I SHOULD HAVE BEEN AN
ACTOR', HE THOUGHT! ANY MOMENT
NOW...ANY MOMENT HER FOUNDRING
HEART WOULD FAIL...

HE'S COMING, CORA!
DON'T YOU HEAR HIM?

YES...
I...



SUDDENLY HER EYES SEEMED TO
POP OUT OF HER HEAD! RALPH
WHISTLED! 'THIS IS IT, CORA!', HE
THOUGHT! SHE HEAVED A FINAL
WRETCHING SIGH AND DOUBLED UP...

CORA!



RALPH BENT OVER HER! SHE WAS DEAD...

POOR
CORA!
POOR...POOR
CORA!



IT CAME THROUGH THE DOOR! IT WAS BENT OVER...
LIKE AN OLD MAN...



SUDDENLY THERE WAS A SOUND IN THE DARKENED
HALLWAY...

WHAT WAS
THAT?



THE STENCH OF GRAVE-MOUNDS FILLED THE ROOM...

KEEP AWAY!
KEEP AWAY
FROM ME!



THE THING REACHED OUT ITS ROT-
TED ARM FOR RALPH... MOVING
TOWARD HIM...



THE CLOTHING HUNG IN SHREDS
FROM ITS MASSOT-COVERED LIMBS!
RALPH CLAWED AT ITS FACE AND
PIECES OF DEAD-FOUL-SMELLING
FLESH CAME OFF IN HIS HANDS...



IT LIFTED HIM IN A VICE-LIKE GRIP
AND CARRIED HIM DOWN THE STAIRS!
THE ODOR OF DECAY BURNED RALPH'S
NOSTRILS AS HE STRUGGLED FOR
AIR...



THE THING WAS STRONG! IT HELD HIM FAST! IT STUM-
BLED OUT ACROSS THE WELL-KEPT LAWNS AND DOWN
THE BLADE TO THE POND! RALPH BEGAN TO SCREAM...



IT STEPPED INTO THE POND... LEADING OUT TO THE
MIDDLE! THE POND BOTTOM WAS SOFT OUT THERE...
LIKE SUPERGLUE! RALPH'S SCREAMING WAS WILD...
ALMOST ANIMAL... LIKE...



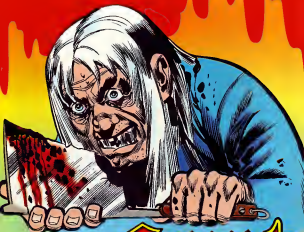
THE THING STOOD ARISE... THERE IN THE CENTER OF
THE POND... CLUTCHING THE STRUGGLING RALPH! SLOWLY,
THEY BEGAN TO SINK... DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO THE
SOFT MUD...



DOWN...DOWN...UNTIL ONLY RALPH'S UPSTRETCHED
HAND REMAINED ABOVE THE SURFACE...



AND THEN... EVEN THAT DISAPPEARED INTO THE MUD!



The Crypt Keeper